

# Reactions of Children to Disaster Elementary School (6-11)

## Common responses in this age group:

- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Whining/clinging
- ◆ Problems with sleep/appetite
- ◆ Aggressive behavior at home or school
- ◆ Extra competition for parents attention
- ◆ Night terrors, nightmares, fear of darkness
- ◆ Avoiding school – problems separating from parents
- ◆ Withdrawal from other children their age
- ◆ Loss of interest and poor performance in school
- ◆ Physical problems (such as headaches, bowel or bladder problems)

## Some ways adults may help:

- ◆ Be patient with overly demanding behavior
- ◆ Help children talk about their feelings and reactions to the disaster
- ◆ Ease up on school and home expectations (for a while)
- ◆ Give extra individual attention
- ◆ Talk about the disaster and plan what to do in future disasters

*Consider professional mental health services for children whose responses to the disaster are getting in the way of regular home and school life.*

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

State of North Carolina \* Department of Health and Human Services  
NC DHHS is an equal opportunity employer



Although people of all ages share many feelings and reactions after a disaster, children need special attention.

## **Typical reactions for children of all ages:**

- ◆ Fear of future disasters
- ◆ Behaviors they might have shown at an earlier age (such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking)
- ◆ Trouble sleeping
- ◆ Fear of events associated with the disaster
- ◆ Fear of being left by loved ones